United Nations A/C.3/65/L.9/Rev.1

General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
26 October 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Third Committee
Agenda item 27 (d)
Social development: United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

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United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 56/116 of 19 December 2001, by which it proclaimed the ten-year period beginning on 1 January 2003 the United Nations Literacy Decade, its resolution 57/166 of 18 December 2002, in which it welcomed the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade,[1] and its resolutions 59/149 of 20 December 2004, 61/140 of 19 December 2006 and 63/154 of 18 December 2008,

Recalling also the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[2] in which Member States resolved to ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education, which requires a renewed commitment to promote literacy for all,

Reaffirming the Education for All goals, in particular Goal 3, on ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes, and Goal 4, on achieving a

[1] See A/57/218 and Corr.1.
[2] See resolution 55/2.

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50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults,

Reaffirming also the emphasis placed by the 2005 World Summit on the critical role of both formal and non-formal education in the achievement of poverty eradication and other development goals as envisaged in the Millennium Declaration, in particular basic education and training for achieving universal literacy, and the need to strive for expanded secondary and higher education as well as vocational education and technical training, especially for girls and women, the creation of human resources and infrastructure capabilities and the empowerment of those living in poverty,

Reaffirming further that quality basic education is crucial to nation-building, that literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, addressing population growth, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women, ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy, and promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Convinced that literacy is crucial to the acquisition by every child, youth and adult of the essential life skills that will enable them to address the challenges that they can face in life and represents an essential condition of lifelong learning, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the knowledge societies and economies of the twenty-first century,

Affirming that the realization of the right to education, especially for girls, contributes to the promotion of human rights, gender equality and the eradication of poverty,

Recognizing the necessity of improving all aspects of the quality of education so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy, essential life skills and human rights education, thereby enabling all persons to excel,

Welcoming the considerable efforts that have been made so far by Member States and the international community to address the objectives of the Decade and to implement the International Plan of Action, in particular in the three priority areas for the remaining years of the Decade identified through the mid-Decade review, namely, mobilizing stronger commitment to literacy, reinforcing effective literacy programme delivery and harnessing new resources for literacy,

Recognizing the importance of removing barriers, outside and within education systems, so as to provide equitable educational and learning opportunities for all children,

Reaffirming the right of indigenous peoples to have non-discriminatory access to all levels and forms of education provided by States, and recognizing the importance of effective measures to promote access by indigenous individuals, in particular children, to education in their own language, when possible, as addressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,[3]

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[3] Resolution 61/295, annex.

Noting with deep concern that 796 million adults do not have basic literacy skills,[4] 69 million children of primary school age remain out of school,[5] and millions more young people leave school without a level of literacy adequate for productive and active participation in their societies, that the issue of literacy may not be sufficiently high on national agendas to generate the kind of political and economic support required to address global literacy challenges and that the world is unlikely to meet those challenges if the present trends continue,

Deeply concerned about the persistence of the gender gap in education, which is reflected by the fact that nearly two thirds[4] of the world's adult non-literates are women,

Concerned about the challenges that the financial and economic crisis poses to education budgets and international funding for education, with a possible negative effect on spending for literacy programmes,

Recalling its resolution 64/290 of 9 July 2010 on the right to education in emergency situations,

Concerned that, according to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization estimates, one third of the children not attending school are children with disabilities and that the literacy rate among adults with disabilities is as low as 3 per cent in some countries,

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the implementation of the International Plan of Action for the United Nations Literacy Decade,[6] including the strategic priorities outlined therein for the next phase of the Decade and beyond;

2. *Takes note* of the 2008 publication *The Global Literacy Challenge: a profile of youth and adult literacy at the mid-point of the United Nations Literacy Decade 2003-2012*, the Education for All *Global Monitoring Report 2010: Reaching the Marginalized*, the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*, prepared for the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, held in December 2009, the 2009 review of the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, the synthesis report of the Eighth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on Education for All, held in Abuja, in June 2010, and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization programme reports;

3. *Also takes note* of the outcome documents of the five regional preparatory conferences held in 2008 and 2009 in preparation for the 2009 Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, as well as the summary outcomes of the Regional Conferences in Support of Global Literacy, held in Azerbaijan, China, India, Mali, Mexico and Qatar in 2007 and 2008,[7] which indicate that in the second half of the Decade appropriate networks should be developed for greater regional collaboration;

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[4] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Global Education Digest 2010: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World*, available at http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2010/GED_2010_EN.pdf.

[5] See http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/GMR/pdf/gmr2010/MDG2010_Facts_and_Figures_EN.pdf.

[6] See A/65/172.

[7] Available from http://www.unesco.org/education/en/literacy/conferences.

4. *Recognizes* that a renewed collective commitment and stronger international partnerships in support of literacy efforts at the national level will be needed if the objectives of the Decade are to be met;

5. *Calls upon* Member States, their development partners, the international donor community, the private sector and civil society, in accordance with national law, to further scale up quality literacy efforts and consider the post-2012 strategy for addressing youth and adult literacy challenges, bearing in mind that just over two years remain of the United Nations Literacy Decade and that the target date of 2015 for the achievement of the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development Goals is approaching;

6. *Recognizes* the importance of continuing to implement national programmes and measures to eliminate illiteracy worldwide as part of the commitments made in the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All,[8] adopted in 2000 at the World Education Forum, and in the Millennium Development Goals, and, in this regard, also recognizes the important contribution of South-South and triangular cooperation through, inter alia, innovative pedagogical methods in literacy;[9]

7. *Calls upon* Member States to further reinforce political will, giving literacy higher priority within their educational planning and budgeting;

8. *Appeals* to all Governments to develop reliable literacy data and information and more inclusive policymaking environments and to devise innovative strategies for reaching the groups disproportionately affected by illiteracy, in particular the poor and those living in the most vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities, and for seeking alternative formal and non-formal approaches to learning with a view to achieving the goals of the Decade;

9. *Appeals* to Governments to take full account of the use of languages in different contexts by promoting multilingual approaches to literacy, through which learners may acquire initial literacy in the language they know best and in additional languages as needed;

10. *Urges* all Governments to take the lead in coordinating the activities of the Decade at the national level, bringing all relevant national actors together in a sustained dialogue and collaborative action on policy formulation, implementation and evaluation of literacy efforts;

11. *Appeals* to all Governments to strengthen national and subnational professional institutions in their countries and to foster greater collaboration among all literacy partners with a view to developing greater capacity to design and deliver high-quality literacy programmes for youth and adults;

12. *Appeals* to all Governments and to economic and financial organizations and institutions, both national and international, to lend greater financial and material support to the efforts to increase literacy and achieve the goals of Education for All and those of the Decade;

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[8] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000).

[9] See the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, para. 71 (g) (resolution 65/1).

13. *Requests* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to reinforce its coordinating and catalysing role in the fight against illiteracy;

14. *Invites* Member States, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to support the implementation of the above priorities within the framework of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;[2]

15. *Calls upon* Member States, in the implementation of the International Plan of Action[1] in the final phase of the Decade, to give adequate attention to the cultural diversity of minorities and indigenous peoples;

16. *Requests* all relevant entities of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in cooperation with national Governments, to take immediate, concrete steps to address the needs of countries with high illiteracy rates and/or with large populations of illiterate adults, with particular regard to women and persons with disabilities, including through programmes that promote low-cost and effective literacy provisions;

17. *Notes* the contribution made by the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, held in Belém, Brazil, in December 2009, to the implementation of the United Nations Literacy Decade, and welcomes the Belém Framework for Action adopted at the Conference;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to seek the views of Member States on the progress achieved in implementing their national programmes and plans of action for the Decade, undertake a final evaluation of the implementation of the Decade by Member States and other stakeholders and submit to the General Assembly in 2013 a final report on the implementation of the International Plan of Action with specific recommendations for the post-Decade period;

19. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-eighth session, under the item entitled "Social development", the sub-item entitled "United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all".